

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 LAB-04 EB-08 AID-05 TRSE-00 CTME-00 EUR-12
/094 W

-----070020 102241Z /73

R 071218Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7434
INFO AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
CINCPAC
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0436

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV ECON EFIN EAGR MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW -- APRIL 7 -- SUMMARY

REF: PORT LOUIS 0396 (DTG 311105Z MAR 78)
PORT LOUIS A-28, APRIL 7, 1978

1. AT A MARCH 30 PRESS CONFERENCE, THE FIRST IN MANY YEARS
CALLED TO DISCUSS LABOR PARTY RATHER THAN GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM WAS MILDLY CRITICAL OF THE BOODHOO
GROUP OF DISSIDENT DEPUTIES FOR HAVING AIRED THEIR COMPLAINTS
IN THE PRESS INSTEAD OF WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE PARTY.
HE ASLO REPROVED THE PRESS FOR INACCURATE REPORTING OF INTERNAL
PARTY DISSENSION. BUT HE TOOK A GENERALLY CONCILIATORY
STANCE AND PRAISED THE BOODHOO GROUP FOR HAVING VOTED WITH
THE GOVERNMENT AT THE ASSEMBLY OPENING SESSION AND FOR HAVING
DISPLAYED A COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING PARTY UNITY. RAMGOOLAM
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CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD OFFERED TO RESIGN TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS
BUT HAD BEEN DISSUADED BY HIS COLLEAGUES.

2. THE BOOKHOO GROUP COMMENTED FACORABLY ON THE PRIME
MINISTER'S APPROACH AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, BUT VOWED TO
CONTINUE THEIR FIGHT FOR RADICAL PARTY REFORMS. THE
DISSIDENTS ARE REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO VOTE AGAINST

CERTAIN ITEMS IN THE FORTHCOMING GOVERNMENT BUDGET TO ENFORCE THEIR DEMANDS. THE LABOR PARTY HAS APPOINTED EIGHT COMMITTEES TO STUDY AND TRY TO RESOLVE THE REMAINING ISSUES RAISED BY THE BOODHOO GROUP.

3. THE OPPOSITION MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) ELECTED A NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND POLITBURO. MOST MEMBERS OF THE LATTER WERE RE-ELECTED,SO THERE WAS VERY LITTLE CHANGE IN THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP. KEY MEMBERS OF THE MMM'S RADICAL LEFT-WING FACTION DECLINED TO STAND FOR PARTY OFFICE, WHICH LEAVES THEM UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. BERENGER AND HIS ASSOCIATES REMAIN FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF THE MOVEMENT. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW BERENGER AGAIN CALLED FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS TO GET THE COUNTRY OUT OF ITS CURRENT POLITICAL-ECONOMIC IMPASSE, BUT HE ALSO PROMISED THAT THE MMM WOULD NOT TRY TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT'S HAND BY RESORTING TO SUCH TACTICS AS STRIKES WND STREET ACTION.

4. THE MMM NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED AN ALLEGED CONFESSION BY A CERTAIN SHEIK HOSSEN WHO CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN INFILTRATED INTO THE CERNEEN NEWSPAPER AS AN AGENT OF THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE. THIS CHARGE CAUSED A GENERAL UPROAR IN JOURNALISTIC AND GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES, EVEN THOUGH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ISSUED A FIRM DENIAL OF THE MAN'S STORY. THE EMBASSY HAS LEARNED FROM THE SPECIAL BRANCH CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT THE MAN'S ALLEGATIONS ARE FALSE, BUT THERE IS DIS-AGREEMENT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OVER WHETHER TO TRY TO PROSECUTE THE MMM NEWSPAPER.

5. IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE THERE WAS MOSTLY BAD NEWS.THE FINANCE MINISTER REQUESTED 114 MILLION RUPPEES OF ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, WHICH WILL INCREASE THE BUDGET DEFICIT SUBSTANTIALY. HE ALSO IMPOSED INCREASES IN CUSTOMS DUTIES AND EXCISE TAXES ON A HOST OF LUXURY IMPORTS TO TRY TO RAISE ADDITIONAL REVENUE AND REDUCE THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT. THE CHAMBER OF AGRICULTURE PREDICTED A SMALLER SUGAR CROP THAN LAST YEAR (DOWN TO 655,000 TONS), WHICH COULD FALL EVEN LOWER BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO STOP SUBSIDIZING THE PRICE OF FERTILIZER. AND THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX ROSE ANOTHER ONE AND A HALF POINTS, THE STEEPEST INCREASE IN SOME TIME.
KEELEY

NOTE: TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PORTL00436
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780154-0698
Format: TEL
From: PORT LOUIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780480/aaaacqjc.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: 44fc34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PORT LOUIS 396
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3040622
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW -- APRIL 7 -- SUMMARY
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ECON, EFIN, EAGR, MP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/44fc34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014